

When decision makers convened today for local government's in-person March plenary, they delivered cross-party support for an amendment of the tax ordinance regulating fees paid by new businesses and temporary early permits for professional activity.

Land chief Rafael González defended the measure as a "needed economic boost" and cast it as part of a broader effort by Formentera's government to help hometown businesses ride out the economic storm with a combination of assistance and reimbursements of taxes and fees. Start-up dues will be subsidised to the tune of 50% through year's end and an 83.3% pullback has been announced on changes of ownership and upgrade fees, which will go from €1,200 to €200.

Last tweaked in 2013, the ordinance must now be adapted to new regulations, with a legal opinion to be issued in 2022 expected to carry additional associated taxes — those will apply to non-permanent or itinerant professional activity not subsidised by the Consell or subject to municipal controls and inspections, and González insisted their entry into force was contingent on interim economic turnaround.

Contract with GIREF temporary consortium

The local cabinet overcame abstention from the opposition to approve the 2021 operating schedule and make official last year's contract with GIREF, a temporary consortium formed to oversee for project drafting and construction, commissioning and operation of integrated waste treatment facilities per Eivissa and Formentera's Urban Waste Management Plan. Environment chief Antonio J. Sanz noted that a transfer fee of €145.11/tonne per 2021 had been set. Lawmakers also rejected the concessionaire's request for compensation for post-pandemic fallout.

Municipal fire brigade

Assembly members came together to green-light modification of the jobs catalogue to classify municipal firefighters as C1 workers as now listed in local government's 2021 budgets. Temporary head of human resources Antonio J. Sanz said the measure sought to bring employment practices in line with current regulation and was the product of a multilateral agreement with unions. New internal regulations for the local fire and rescue service also

passed with cross-party support. Interior chief Josep Marí said the vote meant regulations were “up to date and in line with today’s reality”, and would “lay the groundwork for the functioning of Formentera’s fire brigade”.

Diversity in schools

Assembly members additionally united behind a proposal to staff Formentera schools with teachers specially trained in diversity. Education and culture chief Susana Labrador presented the measure, which calls on the Balearic ministry of education and vocational training to hire support professionals and/or instructors to ensure care for students with special educational needs. She stressed that “students with special needs must be a priority” and called the assembly’s unanimous support for the measure “significant”.

ACAF

Plenary participants handed cross-party backing to regulatory framework for the partnership between Formentera’s government and the Audiovisual Cultural Association of Formentera (ACAF) for content production at local public radio station Ràdio Illa in 2021. Under the arrangement, the Consell pledges up to €50,000 to ensure effective and adequate public service communication. Susana Labrador took the opportunity to applaud the professionals at Ràdio Illa and ACAF members “for their work, previous and ongoing, since the start of the pandemic. Their uninterrupted reporting will be a benchmark in terms of the public information service”. Labrador’s assessment was echoed by the opposition.

Molí Vell de la Mola, Formentera’s first landmark of cultural interest

The GxF and PSOE cabinet trumped the abstention of Sa Unió members to classify La Mola’s lighthouse as a cultural interest site (BIC). According to heritage chief Raquel Guasch, designation of el molí Vell de la Mola as Formentera’s first BIC monument “is the culmination of an administrative, technical and legal process dating back to November 2019”. She insisted the team overseeing the affair had “dotted every i and crossed every t to make sure technical and legal requirements were in place”. “Protecting our heritage is the first step to enriching its value: it helps us grow as a society and it’s a path on which we intend to continue”, she concluded.

DGT

With “yes”s from GxF and PSOE and “no”s from Sa Unió, backing was secured for a cabinet-brokered proposal urging the Directorate General of Traffic (DGT), part of Spain’s Ministry of Interior, to study the possibility of providing face-to-face service on Formentera. According to general services chief Bartomeu Escandell, the proposal —a response to pandemic-era mobility restrictions and the triplified effect of insularity that blocks Formentera residents from accessing the same services as other Spanish citizens— puts regional and

central government authorities on the hook with guaranteeing a wider array of locally available services.

Sewage pipe upgrades

Cross-party support materialised behind a proposal tabled by Sa Unió councillors and amended by cabinet members which presses the Balearic government to issue fresh calls for repairs of the island's sewage pipe and an operational audit of the waste water treatment plant. Environment councillor Antonio J. Sanz stressed "the importance of consensus among parties on environmental issues such as this one".

Josep Marí reports

Chief of infrastructure, primary sector and interior Josep Marí gave an account of progress within his departments. Regarding the primary sector, Marí called recovery of the countryside and rural areas "one of the Consell's strategic axes since its 2007 founding" and summarised related work over his nearly two years in office. As for the local farmers' co-operative (Cooperativa del Camp), the councillor highlighted economic support from the Consell in the form of an annual €130,000 grant, which is designed chiefly to fund efforts associated with the 'fons de terres' ". Made up of plots offered up by local landowners for growing and conservation, the "farmland reserve" currently stewards 270 hectares (ha). Sygpac calculates that there are 2,325 ha of cultivated land on the island, more than 10% of which is cared for by the farmers' co-op.

Marí also held up ongoing work to promote traditional fishing, highlighting collaboration between the Consell and the fishermen's guild and speaking to the two entities' shared goal of "offering islanders quality fish caught using sustainable practices that preserve the surrounding seabed and guarantee a rich, extensive marine biomass".

On infrastructure, he said that projects under way today incorporated the two-fold objective of improving the island's towns and services and jumpstarting the economy, pointing out hard times had not put a stop to public works. As Marí gave an overview of the main projects in the offing, he insisted inhabitants' tranquility was central to current and future changes in urban areas, and emphasised key features like more walking areas and fewer architectural barriers.

Lastly, the councillor expounded on work within the interior department, highlighting difficulties over the last twelve months: "We've been on the front line during this worldwide pandemic, and on all fronts, monitoring and enforcing the stream of regulations, orders, restrictions, lockdown

rules and tier changes and guaranteeing at all times the sort of public service that the situation required". In that respect, he praised "the efforts of local law enforcement and emergency responders in this difficult year, and of all municipal workers in general".

Proclamation

Before concluding the day's session, the cabinet and opposition united in support of a declaration to commemorate International Transgender Day of Visibility. 31 March is a day dedicated to celebrating trans* people around the world and raising awareness about the discrimination they face. In the words of equality chief Vanessa Parellada, "with this declaration, we add our names to a celebration trans* pride and visibility. By presenting the Consell's support, we offer our hope that such pride and visibility never stop".

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